

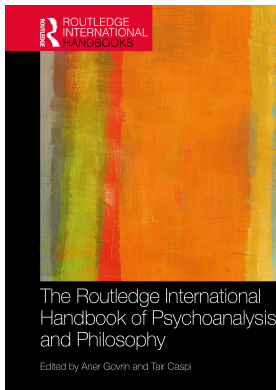
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### **Subject and Subjecthood**

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## SUBJECT AND SUBJECTHOOD

## From Philosophy to Psychoanalysis

*Uri Hadar***Introduction**

What does it mean to be a subject? What does it take to become one? Does subjecthood constitute a particular state of affairs, a particular kind of being, or is it an ethical value, or even an esthetic value? These questions, in different shapes and forms, have guided the philosophy of the mind ever since Descartes formulated a principle of subjectivity as constitutive of the human condition: “I think therefore I am”. Here, human existence is defined as being a subject – not any objective being, not even as an object of knowledge, not a product of a cognizing mind, but rather an activity whose sole witness is the human individual. There is no need for an external consciousness to validate human existence, only the performance of an un-observable activity: thinking. This is where the modern subject has started a remarkable revolution in understanding the human condition (Ricoeur 1981).

Many were quick to notice the paradigm shift: from aspiring to establish universal principles for world and man, where truth and morality largely overlapped, philosophy turned towards the particularity of the human mind and the human condition, trying to investigate their particular forms and the manner in which these forms come into being. Leibnitz, Hume, Kant and Hegel (as well as many others) continued explicitly from the point with which Descartes had left us. They tried to understand the paradigm shift that subjectivity entails and explore its consequences. By and large, this line of investigation had to reach a psychology, had to reach the attempt to understand the minds of particular people, as opposed to general principles. But there was more than one way to connect modern (or modernistic) philosophy with the understanding of people in their particularity.

One way continued directly from modernistic philosophy, grounding it, on the one hand, in the materiality of human existence and, on the other hand, in the rigor of formal logic. This line of investigation came to be known as phenomenology, a term that, together with a few important other terms, must be credited to Edmund Husserl (1936/1970). Other major names in this line of investigation were, of course, Hegel, Marx, Heidegger and Sartre. The latter explicitly addressed continental psychoanalysis and, in that sense, offered a bridge between philosophy and psychology. Like Sartre (1943/1958), I believe that psychoanalysis generally and Freud particularly were part of this line of developing ideas.

Another way of connecting philosophy to psychology followed a more empiricist line of investigation and was mediated by American pragmatists such as Dewey and James (James 1907/1975). At the center of this line of investigation was the attempt to achieve certainty in a

domain that repeatedly frustrates certainty: abstract thought. And the method was to connect abstract entities with external referential fields. In the words of Bertrand Russell, rules (like those of logic and mathematics) are discovered, not constructed. This has generally been the way of analytic philosophy and empirical psychology (Russell 1965). I contend without arguing in any detail that subject and subjectivity were not a central theme in this line of thought, and therefore I do not discuss it at any length.

Freud had never referred to himself as a phenomenologist. Rather, he was compared to Nietzsche by Ernest Jones (Jones 1953), especially in Nietzsche's notion of resentment as anticipatory of the discovery of the unconscious. Freud himself, apparently, denied borrowing from Nietzsche and avoided reading him. In the end, it was the seminal work of Paul Ricoeur (1970), *Freud and Philosophy*, that strongly tied up Freud with phenomenology generally and Nietzsche particularly. In that sense, my paper follows up on Ricoeur's ideas. Ricoeur also offers the link to Lacan, albeit in a not entirely benign manner. When *Freud and Philosophy* started to acquire acclaim in the 1970s, Lacan accused Ricoeur of indirect plagiarism. Clearly, Lacan thought that Ricoeur's portrayal was rather similar to his own conception of the related history of ideas.

Lacan is probably the first of the psychoanalysts who regarded the task of psychoanalysis as the investigation and facilitation of subjectivity (Lacan 1955/2006). Like Freud, he saw the dialectic of object relatedness as crucial here (although he preferred the Hegelian terminology of subject and other [rather than ego and object]). Yet, unlike Freud, he did not predicate subjectivity on a mental activity (desire or being conscious) but rather on an observable activity (speaking). In that sense, he aligned himself with Marx (1847/1955), who also anchored subjecthood in an observable activity (work) as against the mental anchorings of all others (Descartes included) in the phenomenological line of thinking. This made Lacan a 'political' theorist in the sense that action always lay a central axis for the workings of psychoanalysis, both psychologically and as a method of treatment. It so happened – and not by chance – that the Paris rebels of 1968, including his son-in-law (Jacques-Alain Miller), understood Lacan's theory as contributive to their struggle to change society.

In the present chapter, I investigate the different notions of subjecthood along the phenomenological line of thought. I analyze the various approaches to subjecthood in order to elucidate its many faces rather than to derive an ultimate truth (regarding subjecthood). In my discussions, Lacan often acts as a central axis not so much because I view his approach as correct, but rather in order to create a reference axis for the chapter as whole. It is relevant, though, that Lacan is probably the most 'philosophical' of all major psychoanalysts. Indeed, he has explicitly discussed psychoanalytic ideas in their relation to a host of philosophers such as Aristotle, Plato, Descartes, Kant, Hegel, Heidegger and Sartre.

In the next section I present the landmarks I chose for the discussion of subject and subjecthood through the work of Descartes, Hegel, Marx, Husserl, Freud, Lacan and Benjamin. I elaborate on the association between Marx and Lacan in their view of the subject as rooted in action, rather than interpretation. I then discuss the role of the Other in the constitution of subjectivity by comparing Lacan's and Hegel's views. My analysis then situates Husserl as the interface between philosophy and psychoanalysis in construing subjectivity as an epistemological cornerstone. I show the remarkable affinity between Husserl and Freud and present Lacan's contribution as a Husserlian re-interpretation of Freud. I then describe briefly the relational contribution to understanding the subject.

In the third section, I discuss selected issues in subjecthood in order to derive a general characterization of the issues involved. These include self consciousness (SC), splitting, intentional action, the incorporation of otherness and reflective continuity (identity). I dwell on the issue of splitting at some length in order to derive the various notions of unconscious processes and

then discuss *action* as a feature that renders subjecthood a developmental process. I show that there is a structural–developmental coherence that (1) starts with a basic mental activity, leading to (2) the representation in SC and culminating in (3) intentional action. I then define identity as a structural similarity (homeomorphism) among these three constituents of subjecthood. The general characterization of subjecthood leads me to examine the special status of a social group when it incorporates subjecthood, and I link this form back to Marx’s view of social change, as well as to Lacan’s Other.

The fourth section discusses a number of issues in the linguistic use of the word ‘subject’ and the possible consequences they entail for the understanding of subjectivity. I show that subjecthood implies the centering of the subject within the field of SC (self consciousness). I then discuss splitting in the linguistic sense of a possible gap between the subject of the statement and the subject of enunciation (in first-person expressions). Finally, and most informatively, I examine the cases in which ‘subject’ appears in a passive form (being ‘subject to’ something).

I conclude by making some comments regarding the implications of my analysis for therapy, broadly defined as the facilitation of subjecthood by conversation. I show that this largely agreed-upon definition of the aim of analysis implies an ethical position, namely, the facilitation of attunement to otherness.

### Approaches to Subjecthood

What was the revolutionary thing that Descartes (1644/2016) did in his *cogito*? What did he do to deserve being widely considered the father of philosophizing the modern subject? What he did was to show that, when a being capable of a certain distinct mental faculty exercises this faculty, (s)he creates a whole ontology that centers around this faculty. Exercising a faculty effectively defines modes of being. Over a certain set of faculties that are by and large mental, their related mode of being is what we regard as subjecthood. What we have here is a transition – a regress, really – from exercising a faculty to a mode of being. This general formula has remained the same in the centuries that have passed since Descartes. What changed among different thinkers is the faculty whose exercising is the one that creates subjecthood in humankind. I state this here quite succinctly, but the underlying drama is huge. None less than a rational mythology of how an abstract idea turns into the reality of being human. And all that in a short, aphoristic line: *cogito ergo sum* – well, of course, together with the explanation that followed.

Hegel (1807/1977) introduced a considerable change of perspective in arguing that subjecthood is not a solid state, not something that is delivered to man wholesale, but rather something that has an entire developmental itinerary. It starts with an idea that has a somewhat Platonic existence and hovers around the universe until it negates itself onto the realm of the objective, of *das Ding*, of being in itself. This then enters a developmental process in its own right, largely describable as the increase in complexity that is created by a series of small-scale ‘negations’ of the kind that characterizes life. The ‘thing’ dies and then lives again. Increases in complexity and then dies again, and so on. At a certain point, the increasing complexity acquires a critical level and performs a qualitative leap that provides it with the ability to reflect upon itself, to become self conscious. It is this ability that renders (wo)man a subject.

What is revolutionary in Hegel’s formulation is not only the idea that subjecthood is anchored in a developmental process, but also, and not less so, the idea that this is a process of negation, in which something requires an *otherness* in order to develop into a subject. No being can become a subject from purely within itself without relating to something that is crucially other than itself, so much so that the meeting of this being with its other amounts to a process of negation. In Hegel’s words, the subject may be seen as “self-consciousness (that) has equally superseded its

externalization and objectivity too, and taken it back into itself so that it is in communion with itself in its otherness as such” (Hegel 1807/1977, p. 479). Otherness is at the heart of the subject. I shall dwell upon this matter in discussing Lacan’s elaboration of Hegelian ideas.

The next turn of the key of ideas came fairly soon after that of Hegel’s and, to a large extent, as an elaboration of it. I refer to Marx’s anchoring of subjecthood in work (Marx 1847/1955). The notion of ‘work’ already appears in Hegel (1807/1977) in the form of what the slave (bondsmen) must do to obtain the recognition of the master. Only the master’s recognition offers the slave something of a subjecthood, and (s)he needs to work for this. Marx (1847/1955) has made this into the prime route to subjecthood for all people. For him, work acts as a universal vehicle of subjectification, although some of us (masters or capital owners) deprive the working persons of their subject positioning and take it for ourselves. In order for working people to reclaim their subjecthood, they need to resist the masters’ robbery. This is an act of rebellion that operates as Marx’s rendering of Hegel’s ‘negation’. But in Marx’s rendering (Marx 1845/1969), negation cannot be exercised by an individual mind. Rather, it acts on a collective level and requires intentional collaboration. The reason for this dwells in the fact that the logic of wealth appropriation is a logic of social order and social structure. And these can be changed only by a collective effort. For Marx, then, being a subject requires a double articulation of the process of liberation: once in the form of work and once in the form of collective resistance. This double articulation appears as the layering of subjecthood between a primary, constituting activity (‘thought’, ‘work’, etc.) and a secondary, elaborative ‘action’.

The double articulation of the process of liberation (which for Marx is effectively the process of subject positioning) appears in Lacan through the double articulation of the other. Lacan adopts Hegel’s idea that no subjecthood can develop from within itself: it requires an otherness that dwells at the heart of subjecthood. For Lacan, this double articulation represents different (psycho)logical systems, one between subject and object (paradigmatically the mother, but also the subject and its mirror image) and one between subject and the collective (Other with a capital ‘O’ or the order of ‘the name of the father’). I shall discuss this double articulation of otherness in both Lacan and Marx later in this chapter, but before doing so, I wish to present three more approaches to subjecthood: Husserl’s, Freud’s and Benjamin’s.

For Husserl (1936/1970), subjecthood is rooted in *experience*, namely, in the ability to register mental states. Again, it is not easy to convey the extent to which this idea is revolutionary. Before Husserl, everybody tried to be objective in order to present something of a general truth. Generality was identified with objectivity. Husserl, to my knowledge, was the first to present a radically subjective state/act – experience – as the basis for both subject positioning and *knowledge*. Of course, experience acted as a cornerstone of subjecthood before Husserl, especially in the romantic tradition, where it was radically individualistic (Morrow 2011). Husserl, however, developed a whole algorithm of translating individual experience into a general truth. By articulating it, Husserl effectively overcame the age-old schism between individual and collective. Crudely put, the algorithm works in the following way: first there is an individual experience; for example, the view of an apple. In the beginning, the subject has no idea what the truth value of this experience might be: there may be an apple out there but then again, there might not. At this point, rather than setting about corroborating or refuting the reality of the apple experience, the subject *brackets* it as a possibility: maybe an apple and maybe not. Then somebody else comes over, and they have or have not the apple experience, and after a number of ‘social’ iterations of that kind a truth emerges. The experience of the apple is (or isn’t) an apple. A transition has occurred from individual experience to an *intersubjective* truth. We see here the traces of Marx’s double articulation: one individual, one collective – or rather, intersubjective. Husserl was the first to use this term. In predicating truth on a (inter)subjective principle, Husserl presented

a whole logic of subjectivity that is not less rigorous than any other logic. He thus promoted another project originating in Hegel, namely, the derivation of a formal inferential system that is not based on consistency (the Aristotelian absence of contradiction) and therefore allows a logic of change (Husserl 1913/2006).

Now, Freud and Husserl worked largely in parallel to each other, historically speaking, and developed theories whose *machineries* were very different. Husserl's was a formal logic, while Freud's was a biology. And yet, as far as the structural properties of subjecthood are concerned, they were remarkably similar. This similarity emerges if we consider the structural model of ego,<sup>1</sup> id and superego in the following way. Id may be considered as an unexamined or unprocessed level of mental activity, largely parallel to Husserl's 'experience'. Superego may be considered as a set of formal principles that determines what is and what is not socially ('intersubjectively', in Husserl's terminology) acceptable. And ego is comparable to Husserl's bracketing, inasmuch as it originates in the effort to suspend the determination or satisfaction of id-based mental dynamisms ('drives'). Of course, Husserl was a logician and a philosopher, while Freud was a biologist (Sulloway 1979), but this disciplinary difference renders their affinity even more remarkable. Clearly, at the beginning of the 20th century, the phenomenological itinerary led to structurally similar conceptions of subjecthood, irrespective of disciplinary differences. On this analogy, if Husserl's subject is an experiencing being, Freud's subject is a *desiring* being. Note that I equate here 'drive' and 'desire', which is acceptable in Freud's thinking, but not in Lacan's. Putting aside, for the time being, this difference between a push-based concept (drive) and a pull-based concept (wish), we can say that the main difference between Husserl's subject and Freud's subject concerns restlessness. Husserl's subject is relatively tranquil, whilst Freud's is in a frenzy, endlessly conflicted.

The source of restlessness of the Freudian subject dwells in the idea that subjecthood is tied up with sexuality. This idea is almost totally new in thinking the subject, no one before Freud even considered this possibility. But for Freud the biologist of the mind (Sulloway 1979), being a subject, being aware of oneself and able to exercise choice, had to be tied up with a particular drive that affords it, namely, a drive in which plurality is inherent. And this drive could only be a sexual drive. No other basic need could entertain such a wide range of possible satisfactions, both in terms of object and in terms of process. This is why the multiplicity of forms – an intrinsic *perversion*, as Freud called it – was grasped as written into human sexuality (Freud 1933/1964). One may say, in Freud's spirit, that sexuality could be considered as the subjecthood drive.

Lacan started thinking about these matters when both Husserl and Freud were still alive, and he knew the work of both very well. In some sense, Lacan set out to contain both models of subjecthood in a unitary system of thought. For him, this was a matter of developing psychoanalysis in the direction of a formal system of thought, namely, a re-construction of Freud in the direction of Husserl. His subject therefore is driven by desire in relation to the specular other, the object. Here the subject acquires an identity on the basis of similarity operations. The subject's identity is shaped on the basis of similarity to an ideal other, a (m)other, an ideal(ized) mirror image. His consciousness, on the other hand, is based on the ability to create formal models of a world in which the subject is a member. It involves differentiations that repeatedly accommodate social structures of various kinds. This action-oriented subject, like Marx's, operates his or her constructions in relation to collective entities: an Other with a capital 'O'. Lacan could have used Freud's superego here, but he had a problem with both the term and the concept. The idealized form of the other is part of the specular logic, namely, part of object relatedness, rather than something that 'elevates' the ego but, like the superego, still bases itself on ego constructions (as the term 'superego' implies). Lacan's Other has a logic that is utterly of its own. Of course, it incorporates mental abilities – everything mental does – but it builds itself on abilities that are



critically non-self and non-ego. It is not, in that sense, a 'superego', but rather a language. It has 'lexical' building blocks and 'grammatical' rules that can operate repeatedly to create increasingly complex structures. It is even essentially oppressive, like Marx's class structure. Yet, it is not primarily moralistic, not necessarily a code of conduct, just like you can't treat the rules of chess as a code of conduct (despite the fact that in order to play chess, you must operate according to the rules).

The last twist I wish to present in the subjecthood story is that of relationality, a twist that started in the 1980s and had been influenced by feminist theory. To fit in the phenomenological line that I present here, Jessica Benjamin is probably the most representative theorist in this regard, situating her arguments in the Hegelian context, albeit in a critical manner. According to Benjamin (1995), all approaches to subjecthood have assumed a complementary asymmetry between subject and other that largely conformed to the distinction between master and slave or, rather, between doer and done to. This has resulted in various forms of oppression, some explicit and some implicit. Probably the most subtle forms of oppression appear in intimate relationships, which often involve power struggles. In order to escape this logic of subordination, the subject must be able to grasp the other as subject as well. This involves egalitarian modes of being together and acting together in the different spheres of living, be they intimate, collegial, friendly or other. The assumption of complementary rather than egalitarian practices necessarily drives those involved to subject-object patterns of relationship, rather than the more symmetrical subject-subject relationship. Benjamin's analysis departs from the others I present here in predicating subjecthood not on a particular mode of action or a mental faculty, but rather on a mode of relatedness. Relationships do not act, like before, as merely a medium of practice or a medium of expression, but rather as the breeding ground of subjectivity. In Benjamin one becomes a subject by relating oneself to an other who has a say on who the subject is. The other becomes a subject herself. One needs the other as a subject in order to become a subject oneself.

### Issues in Subjecthood

In this section I wish to briefly discuss a selected issues that act to differentiate among the different approaches to subjectivity and, through this, help us understand what it might imply. Its growth potential, I would say. This discussion does not aim to rigorously define elements of subjectivity that constitute a 'core' or an 'essence', but rather to underline possibilities. Since, in my view, clinical psychoanalysis aims to promote subjectivity, the patterns that I discuss here could serve to open a range of developmental possibilities rather than portray an ideal model. In the conclusion of this chapter, I offer a number of pointers in this direction.

The first issue I want to discuss is that of self consciousness (SC). My claim is that all phenomenological approaches assume SC as a core feature of subjecthood, even when it does not appear explicitly. Descartes, for example, speaks of the *cogito* as such, irrespective of reference, but the wider context is about the validity of the 'I' as a source of knowledge and, in that sense, constitutes an essentially reflexive act – an SC. This use of the first-person singular in Descartes's formulation is a feat in its own right. Mainstream philosophizing has not been using the first person in order to formulate universal truths, not even Saint Augustine, who is probably the first to grasp the psychological value of saying 'I' (Augustine 870/1933). It is, to a large extent, this epistemological choice to situate the first person at the center of philosophizing that won Descartes the accolades of originator of the modern subject.

In all of the reviewed thinkers, SC constitutes a crucial step in establishing the conditions for freedom and choice. One has to be able to consider possibilities while deferring action in order to make a choice. This is the basis for the most basic split that lies at the heart of subjecthood:

the split between two ontological kinds, one of which is relatively resistant to change and one that is relatively flexible and reproduces the first in a reduced form. Of course, since Descartes, it is easy to place the said split in body and mind respectively, but this distinction does not indicate clearly enough that the crucial step for the establishment of subjectivity is that in which the mind relates itself to the body, the same body in which it necessarily dwells. There is a complicated relationship here between mind and body and it takes the entanglements of Hegelian dialectics to reach a fair representation of this relation, but such a representation also implies a shift in the definition of the related kinds. First, in this era of neuro-monism, the mind-body distinction cannot be sustained, since all mental processes are believed to be served by neural processes (Churchland 1986). There is a homeomorphy between them, an equivalence of complexity. Second, bodily processes already involve our reflections upon them, and the two domains do not remain apart even on a purely phenomenological ground. Freud was crucial in clarifying these processes in much detail, showing, as he did, the rich and elaborate manner in which thoughts and other mental processes transform into closely related bodily processes (Freud & Breuer 1895/1955). By and large, then, SC cannot be predicated on the mind-body distinction but could still, following the linguistic turn in philosophy, be predicated upon the sense-reference distinction (Frege 1892/1980).

Here, one level of mental events, a ‘high’ level, forms itself in relation to the other, ‘low’ level. The high level is said to be a representation of the low level. Often, the field of reference is considered ‘dumb’, lacking in intelligence or flexibility. This does not mean that the field of reference is physical and not mental (as in the mind-body split). Rather, it entertains less degrees of freedom. In some versions, for example, the referential field consists of sense data, of perceptions, while the higher level consists of thoughts or cognitive maps. It is interesting in this respect to note Lacan’s distinction between the Real and the Symbolic. Both are aspects of ‘speech’ as well as of ‘language’, but the first creates mental effects that do not involve conventional meanings, while the latter is based on social conventions, on meaning. On this account, the danger of the Symbolic is its rigidity, because it is inherently lacking of anything Real. The Real is precisely what is missing in the Symbolic. Only by repeated subversion of the Symbolic, of social and linguistic constructs, can there be a renewal of life forces (or death forces; for Lacan there is some equivalence here).

A closely related axis for splitting in the subject is between the process and the content of representation (or enunciation). This is usually articulated under the distinction between two kinds of subject positions: the subject of the *statement* and the subject of *enunciation*. Since the discussion of this line of splitting relies on linguistic-pragmatic considerations, I elaborate upon it in the section on linguistic extensions.

Another issue that emerges as central for the phenomenological approaches to subjecthood is the role of action, of being active, as going beyond mere SC towards changing reality at the level of the other, that is, not merely by undergoing thought processes. Of course, thinking is an activity in and of itself, but it does not, on the face of it, require any transcendence, any transformation into a mode or a kind that is external to the thinking process itself. Again, I am saying “on the face of it” as a tribute to neuro-monism, where thought processes always already involve the externality of neural processes (Churchland 1986). But by ‘action’ I mean an activity that has one leg in internal thought processes, yet it also has an externality that lends it to intersubjective elaboration. In that sense, action always has a social potential, even when its performance is wholly individual. This social potential constitutes its externality, that is, it is external inasmuch as it has a social potential and vice versa. In that sense, my angle here is fairly much in accord with that of the saying that started the serious consideration of action as a dimension of subjectivity, namely, Marx’s 11th thesis on Feuerbach: “Philosophers have hitherto only interpreted the



world in various ways; the point is to change it” (Marx 1845/1969). When we try to formalize this thesis in a principle of subjectivity, we must assume that thought processes are insufficient as a medium of subjecthood. We must engage a whole series of phenomena – notably motor phenomena – that pass into objects. In that sense, actions are transitive and, through this, can change the (physical and social) world.

The principle of action, as I may call it, incorporates the Hegelian developmental model, namely, the idea that subjecthood involves a series of ‘negations’ (transformations) of ontological kinds. It has a time course that starts with an objective process A (experience), leading to representation B that is related to A and in some important sense homeomorphic to it (knowledge), culminating in a process C that is the implementation of B and emanates from it (action). This implies that, for subjecthood to develop, there must be some coherence (which I call here ‘homeomorphy’) between processes A, B and C. If the representational reality B is totally discordant with the mental processes of A (experience), than something is wrong, there is some pathology of subjecthood. Similarly, if the set of (motor) consequences C is discordant with the set of representations B, something is similarly ‘pathological’. Now, it is not easy to determine the precise nature of the required homeomorphy between A, B and C. This homeomorphy is an object of investigation in and of itself and enters the psychoanalytic realm under the heading of *identity*.

It is clear from the above formulations that logical and phenomenological (or psychoanalytic) identity are not the same thing. In logical identity, if A and B have the same identity, everything that holds for A also holds for B. Phenomenological identity, on the other hand, starts with the assumption that, despite their common identity, something crucial must be different between A and B. This principle is probably the distinguishing property of the logic of subjecthood, as against the logic of objecthood (classical logic) and has given rise to the most distinguishing claim of deconstruction (Derrida 1967/1976), but it appears already in Husserl (1936/1970). This raises the question as to what needs to remain the same in order for identity to be preserved at the level of the subject.

The easiest element of identity is the proper name. If a subject has a name that is unique to her, then on the face of it, this suffices for the maintenance of subject identity. Of course, this solution seems something of a bluff: the proper name is totally arbitrary, it can be this and it can be that, it possesses nothing of the intrinsic properties of the subject. Moreover, everything can have a proper name, even kinds that are utterly devoid of subjecthood. Nevertheless, the proper name is often the only common denominator among the different phases of subjecthood (experience, representation, action) and answers well to the global skepticism of the linguistic turn in philosophy (see the *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*: [www.rep.routledge.com/articles/thematic/linguistic-turn/v-1](http://www.rep.routledge.com/articles/thematic/linguistic-turn/v-1)). Yet, psychoanalysis aspires to do better than that.

In psychoanalysis, identity is formed by a certain set of ‘I’ functions that allows the subject to experience herself as the same over time. An important aspect of these functions concerns the defense mechanisms, namely, the manner in which the subject resists external influences and preserves cohesion. This is a very powerful distinctive feature of subject identity: the ability of a person to experience herself as one, and the various ways in which she defends herself against losing this experience. If we now assume the Lacanian perspective of the speaking being, then identity becomes the ability to say ‘I am me’ or ‘I am myself’ (Rozmarin 2009). It is important to stress here the difference between saying ‘I’, namely, being able to use the first person, and saying “I am myself”: the former could be considered a mark of subjecthood (and it often acts in this manner for philosophers who exercise the linguistic perspective on ontology), yet it does not carry the full, three-phase characterization that I have formulated here. “I am myself”, on the

other hand, preserves the tightness of the linguistic turn, while also preserving the complexity of subjecthood, its objective facet.

Above I emphasized that the principle of action renders subjecthood a developmental process, an ontological kind that requires time and qualitative leaps ('negations') in order to establish itself. Now, the principle of action does more than that inasmuch as it also establishes subjecthood as a *social* phenomenon. This, of course, is inherent in Marx's ideas, but he approached it from the vantage point of social action, while I approach it from the vantage point of mental structure. It is therefore particularly significant that here too, action leads us from the individual to the social. It objectifies mental activity and may, in that sense, lead to the various forms of *alienation* (as Marx has shown extensively). At the same time it allows collective action to develop, simply because it makes subjectivity visible or graspable by the other. That means that subjecthood may establish itself on a social level as well as on the individual level. I want to stress that its social mode is not an external property, even though it encapsulate a principle of externality (action). Yet, it is inherent in the individual potential of subjecthood, even when it takes a logic of its own. Let me call the entity of social subjecthood a social group and denote it by SG.

### Social Subjectivity

Ideally, we would like the SG to bear all the marks of individual subjecthood. For a start, we would want to be able to identify the 'mental' activity that defines the SG. Here is where Marx and Lacan become crucial. In individuals, the defining mental activity may be un-observable, but in SGs it may not. Of course, there are *zeitgeists*, unconscious motives, waves of social affects that are not initially observable, and these are in the nature of SGs, but the activity that defines the SG must be shared by its members and therefore be perceivable. Let us say that for an SG there is always some primary activity that is part of its *existence*, rather than being a part of its self consciousness (SC). For a factory it is the production activity, for a football team it is playing football, for a political group it is the conduction of political activities, etc. We shall see below how these defining activities differ from the kind of action that we consider the third phase of subjecthood. In fact, since in social subjecthood the constituting activity cannot be purely mental, its consideration may help us distinguish between levels of activity as they bear upon the constitution of subjecthood.

In addition to a defining activity, we would like to be able to identify in SG the developmental three-phase or three-level structure of individual subjecthood. The level of un-mediated existence is relatively guaranteed by the logic of representation. If the SG represents itself in any way, then this representation always already has an externality to which it refers. Thus, the SG always has members who are human beings who are related to each other in some stable way. These people and their relationships offer the unmediated, primary level of the SG. A member may be ill and not appear to an activity in which (s)he usually participates. This forms a primary event that may or may not be noted and communicated. In fact, the primariness of experience reflects in the fact that *some field of events (experience) is always richer than its representation*. This may effectively act as a definition of the primary experience. Thus, for example, an SG like a football club has members, players, fans, home ground, properties and so on, which form the externality in which the SG is grounded.

Then there is the manner in which SG represents itself. For the sake of simplicity, let me call this representation a 'manifesto'. Notice, however, that the most important component of the manifesto, in terms of subjecthood, is a set of rules that govern the SG (and effectively define it). For example, let us look at a particular factory as an SG. There are rules of working hours, pay, areas of specialization and so on that regulate the operation of the factory and act as a manifesto.

These rules, in and of themselves, effectively also act as an SC, namely, as a self consciousness. Of course, if there are also meetings of management, workers, auxiliary staff and so on, then these meetings augment SC – they make it richer. And if somebody decides to write the history of the factory, then this further enriches its SC. But the manifesto, in and of itself, suffices to create the level of SC that is necessary for social subjecthood. Finally, the level of action is defined by all planned or intended activity beyond the constituting activity. In the case of the factory, its very operation is part of its constituting activity and will not be considered part of its SC. In addition to this, there will also be the various meetings, development plans, social events and so on that form ‘action’ as an extension of the primary activity. By analogy to Marx’s notion of praxis, one may say that the height of action dwells in *changing the manifesto*, but this is not a prerequisite for being an SG.

Now, SGs will typically also have an identity, marked by some proper term. The factory surely will have a name (like, “The Intel industries in Kiryat Gat”), and so would the association (“The Israel association for the advancement of women in politics”) or the football club (“Mac-cabi Tel Aviv FC”). Again, for the sake of simplicity, we can assume that all SGs have proper names that effectively mark their subjecthood. There is a certain balancing act here between the total dependence on context of the first person ‘I’, as against the strong anchoring of the proper name, ‘PN’, in a unitary referential entity. The former indicates the structural property of being at the center of interest or the center of a semantic field (see below). These centers may vary among and within subjects. The latter refers to subjectivity on the whole, or rather, to the objective pole of subjecthood (see below). Being a subject involves the fluctuation between the range of possibilities that is open to subjecthood and the need to anchor it in a particular field of reference – the need to have an identity.

### Linguistic Extensions

There are a few senses or usages of the word ‘subject’ that contribute significantly to the understanding of subjectivity. These senses could be derived from the philosophical literature, but the fact is that they have not been discussed in the way that other issues have been, or very partially so. Linguistic analysis, on the other hand, immediately brings out these senses and contributes significantly to the understanding of subjecthood. This chapter is dedicated to these senses.

The first sense I wish to discuss here usually refers to products of the human mind and specifies their primary theme. It is easiest to see this sense in linguistic objects such as sentences, passages, texts of various lengths and so on. Thus, at sentence level, we have the subject as a specific grammatical category, referring to the noun or the noun phrase on which the sentence focuses. In “the boy closed his eyes” the subject is ‘the boy’, in “the girl in the blue skirt fainted” the subject is ‘the girl’ and so on. By way of extension, we say that the subject of the book may be something like the civil war in the United States and so forth. This applies to other intentional entities such as films, exhibitions, a particular collection of artworks and so on. We can see that the term ‘subject’ in this usage applies to entities that indeed have a subject: they are products of intentional activity. I shall generally refer to such products of intentional activity as ‘collections’. We can see that when ‘subject’ is used to denote ‘a primary theme’ (the subject of the specific collection), it is clearly related to the issue of subjectivity simply in the sense that ‘collections’ are always products of intentional activity.

By and large, the sense of ‘a primary theme’ means that the subject is always at the center of a particular semantic field, namely, his or her own conscious life. Subjecthood, in that sense, implies a whole semantic field, a whole consciousness, in which the subject forms the center. Note that this linguistic derivation is semantically fuller than the minimalistic position whereby

subjecthood is empty: the ability to say 'I'. Here I claim that saying or thinking or feeling 'I' implies the existence of a whole semantic field, a consciousness, whose center resides in the particular first person (both singular and plural, as we have seen above). In my 2005 paper on gender (Hadar 2005), I suggested that the mathematical structure of the group encapsulates and specifies this sense of 'subject' (or property of subjecthood). There, the group is analogous to the present 'semantic field' or 'subjective consciousness'. Each group is associated with a certain operation ('mental activity' in the sense of the present chapter) and a particular element called 'the unit element', around which all other elements of the group are arranged. Specifically, it means that for each element in the group (or the subjective semantic field), there is another element such that the 'operation' on those two elements yields the 'unit' element (the subject). For example, as the subject of political ideas, the individual will tend to perceive the political field of ideas in a way that makes her the center. An extremist is always somebody else. Similarly, as a member of a family the subject will always feel that all other members are defined in their relation to her. To sum up, *subjecthood implies being at the center of a particular semantic field*. We can refer to this semantic field as the subjective consciousness. By 'subject' we usually refer to the 'center' (or unit element, in the language of group theory), but the whole semantic field, no matter how small, is a necessary property.

The second sense of subject I wish to mention here derives from the first and serves for defining the kind of splitting that subjecthood always entails. I refer here to the distinction between 'the subject of the statement' and 'the subject of enunciation'. For the speaker of a natural language (Greek, English, Hebrew, etc.), her propositional<sup>2</sup> speech always has a particular content that is marked by the primary theme. This is the subject of her statement. However, the basic tenet of the Cartesian split is that the act of stating (or 'thinking' in Cartesian terms) defines the speaker as a mode of being. This mode of being is what is linguistically referred to as 'the subject of enunciation'. Of course, it is easiest to distinguish between the two subjects in cases when they dissociate from each other. Thus, in the statement "I am dead", the subject of the statement is an 'I' who is said to be dead, but the speaker, who is the subject of enunciation, is very much alive. It is easy to see that the subject of enunciation is always the subject in the primary sense in which we discuss it in the present chapter, namely, the speaker. Yet, as I have shown above, the subject of the statement is also intimately tied up with subjecthood. The whole splitting issue, to my mind, presents itself best in this split between subjects, and this is also the sense that Lacan preferred in arguing that the (speaking) being is always split for subjecthood (Lacan 1960/2006). In fact, there is always a gap between the subject of the statement (the primary theme) and the subject of enunciation (the speaker), but in many cases it is hidden. For example, in statements in the first person ("I am tired") one assumes that the subject of the statement and the subject of enunciation are identical. Yet, they are not: the subject of the statement is only tired, while the subject of enunciation is many other things as well. For example, if a moment after uttering the statement the speaker experiences a threat to her life, then (s)he may immediately experience a wave of energy that is entirely absent from the statement.

The third sense of 'subject' that derives from its linguistic usages has so far been left entirely outside of my discussion, yet it is crucial for the understanding of subjectivity. Consider the meaning of 'subject' in such a sentence as "The man was subject to intense questioning". Here 'subject' refers to a passive position, while throughout my discussion so far I emphasized agency, namely, the state of being active in the realm of subjective consciousness. Nevertheless, one cannot be subject to something unless one is a subject. The stone cannot be subject to intense pressures (despite its similarity to "The man was subject to intense questioning"). In fact, the prize for being deprived of agency (in being subject to something) is a double subjecthood: the something to which one can be subject is always an intentional act of an agent. Subjecthood

is represented in both the subject and the object of the sentence. Thus, one is never subject to bad weather, an avalanche or an earthquake. What one may be subject to has an agent, so subjecthood is represented in this inflection of subject in the usual sense of a freedom of choice. However, the choice is located in the other.

We can see the other-locatedness of the subject in this form in a slightly different semantic structure, as in “The contract was agreed, subject to approval by the board”. Here, it seems, the only locus that entertains subject positioning is that of the other (‘the board’ in my example). This underlines domination by another subjectivity, but the grammatical subject here is non-human and non-living which, on a superficial level, seems to contradict the idea of double subjecthood (under duress). Still, in this usage, the grammatical subject, despite being non-human, carries subjecthood by virtue of being a product of intentional action (contract, agreement, law, and other entities that require approval, confirmation, validation and the like).

We see here two forms of being subject to something, one in which there are two entities with the potential for subject positioning (“The man was subject to intense questioning”) and one in which the product of subject activity is in suspense (“The contract was agreed, subject to approval by the board”). In both instances, the subjugating act brackets the ability for subject positioning and, by doing so, reveals a fundamental feature of subjecthood. In the first instance, the something to which the subject is given is always negative. One is never subject to a birthday party or to winning the lottery. In my understanding, the negativity of what one may be subject to comes to mark its secondary locus as a subject position. In being subject to something, the situation preserves all the marks of subjecthood in an inverted form. In the second instance, the subjugating act suspends the subjecthood that is represented in the prime theme (the contract, agreement, etc.). In both instances, being subject to something is not a choice, but it still represents a feature that is crucial to subjecthood: one can be deprived of it. It is not something to which a person or some other intentional entity are doomed, like needing to breathe in order to live or like having a body. Subjecthood is something that one can be deprived of.

An extended sense of this kind of positioning is seen in ‘subject’ when it refers to a person who is under the jurisdiction of a king (or equivalent ruler). Here too, being a subject implies the passive position of being governed by a ‘ruler’ – namely, really, a set of rules originating in somebody else’s will. In this sense, like everywhere else in the realm of the subject, the rules that govern the subject are the products of intentional activity. One is not the subject of a gravitational field (or another law of nature) but rather the subject of an intentional entity (usually the personal<sup>3</sup> authority behind a set of rules). It is precisely in that sense that I consider ‘subject’ here (as a juridical personal status, namely, the ruler’s subject) as a linguistic and semantic extension of ‘subject’ as a descriptive status (subject to). In both, the locus of subjecthood is the other rather than the primary theme. The two senses, it seems, are closely related (see also <https://english.stackexchange.com/questions/204691/subject-to-vs-subject-of-what-is-better-what-is-correct>).

All in all, the variety of passive forms of ‘subject’ convey the idea that subjecthood takes place within a rule-governed system. There must be a rule system in order to create the possibility of subjecthood, and all subject positions are governed by one rule system or another. This idea is perfectly encapsulated in Lacan’s Other, and the present discussion only serves as an explicit construal of this.

## Conclusion

In this chapter I have undertaken to clarify the central issues involved in the definition and characterization of ideas regarding subjectivity and the related special ontological kind that we have come to call ‘the subject’. I have sketched a very partial line of ideas along only one trajectory of

thought: phenomenology. I do not make a global epistemological claim for this choice as against the trajectory that leads via analytic philosophy to experimental psychology. Rather, and this is somewhat of a linguistic irony, I made it primarily for the purpose of accommodating (psycho) analysis into my discussion. Truly enough, psychoanalysis centers around the issues of subject and subjectivity. Yet, some of the terms and ideas I have used here are gleaned from analytic philosophy (e.g., the term ‘kind’, as in ‘ontological kind’; see Kendig 2016). Nevertheless, the gist of my argumentation (or even description) comes from the phenomenological line of thought. Now, if this is not an epistemological choice, what is it? I think that it is, to a large extent, an ethical choice. Ethical even in the sense of practical (as in Kant’s [1788/2004] use of ‘practical reason’ as underlying ethics). Especially, if being a subject depends in a critical manner on incorporating otherness, as Levinas (2000) has argued, then this means that being a subject is not only a psychological achievement but rather, and perhaps more meaningfully, an ethical positioning. This idea offers a cornerstone for analytic psychotherapy (Hadar 2013). Psychotherapy, as an interface between the practical (social and personal function) and the ethical (incorporation of otherness), unsettles the distinction between action and interpretation. Action, in the present perspective, forms the advanced phase of subjecthood and builds upon the representation of self in SC. In analytic psychotherapy, interpretation does exactly that: it examines the experience of the subject and the SC to which it has given rise, with the aim of Improving cohesion between the two (ibid.). Moreover, it may be enunciated equally by either subject or other (the therapist) and thus incorporates otherness into subjecthood in perhaps the most radical possible way. The therapist’s enunciations both emanate from within the realm of the subject and preserve their quality as ‘other’. Here we may recall Lacan’s definition of the unconscious as ‘the discourse of the Other’ (Lacan 1954/1991). A discourse that aims to unravel unintended messages incorporates the other in its very intention, in the very act of intending to do so, let alone when interpretation is enunciated in a clear and loud voice by either patient or therapist.

### Notes

- 1 I use here the terminology of the Strachey translation of Freud, despite the fact that it is clearly a deficient translation, as Lacan (1954/1991) neatly showed.
- 2 Speech, of course, does not have to be propositional. People may speak by way of stammering, screaming at somebody, sighing, etc. In these cases, there is no ‘subject of the statement’ and therefore no clear splitting.
- 3 What distinguishes between a subject and a citizen is precisely this matter, that the ruler of the subject is a personal entity, while the ruler of the citizen is the state.

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